



# MMF CHIMNEY SWIFT MONITORING PROGRAM

Métis Community-Based Climate Monitoring Program



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# CHIMNEY SWIFT 101



Michif: **enn shimnii** (chimney), **kishiikoochin** (swift)

Scientific Name: *Chaetura pelagica*

## WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- ∞ Often referred to as a 'flying cigar'
- ∞ Grey, streamlined body with long and skinny wings
- ∞ Often mistaken for swallows— their tail is stubby and short, instead of long and forked like swallows
- ∞ Fly erratically—no pattern to their flight
- ∞ Stay in the sky for long periods of time— they will eat, drink, and collect nesting resources in the sky
- ∞ Leave the sky only to tend to nests and roost at night

## WHERE CAN IT BE FOUND?

- ∞ Arrives in Manitoba during mid-May, migrates south in late August
- ∞ Historically built nests inside large, hollowed out trees, but the decline of old-growth forest over the years has allowed for swifts to adapt to nesting and roosting inside chimneys
- ∞ Only one breeding pair will occupy a chimney

## MAJOR THREATS:

- ∞ Conservation Status: **Threatened** (Species at Risk Act)  
**Threatened** (Manitoba Endangered Species and Ecosystems Act)
  - Meaning it is illegal to kill or harm this species, or destroy its habitat
- ∞ Populations in Canada have dwindled by 95% over just a few decades
- ∞ Challenges with Manitoba being at the north-western edge of chimney swift range – leading to shorter nesting season, colder temperatures, less precipitation, and less suitable locations for habitat

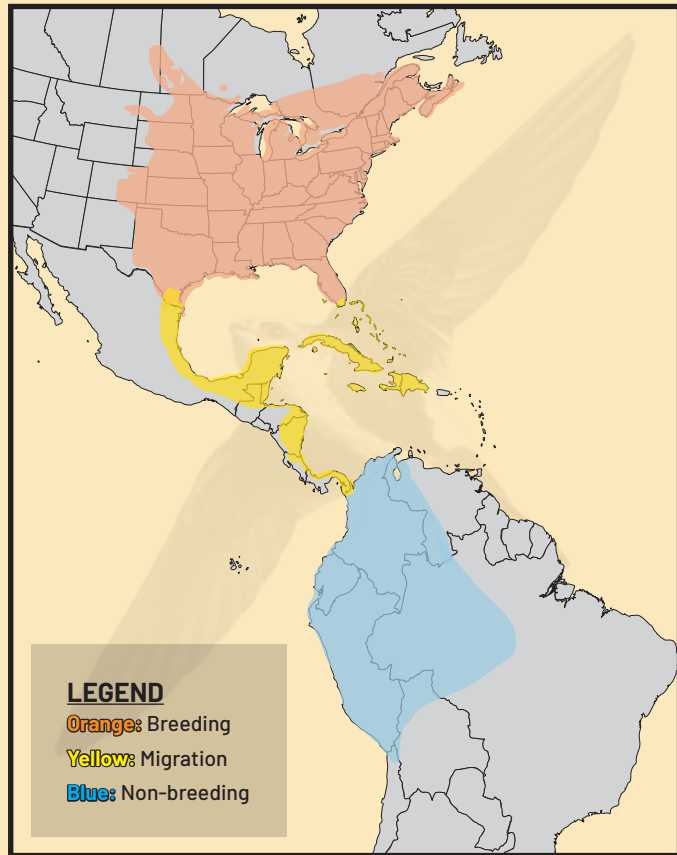
- ∞ Less available suitable habitat—very few chimneys or old-growth forest
- ∞ Decline in their food source (insects) due to increased pesticide use in urban areas where chimneys are often located

## WHAT CAN YOU DO TO HELP?

- ∞ If you have a chimney on your home, do not demolish it
- ∞ Reduce the use of pesticides
- ∞ Keep old trees on your property, especially if they are hollowed out
- ∞ More '**Eyes on the sky**': look for them in and around your neighborhood – paying special attention to chimneys (if you see chimney swifts, let us know!)
- ∞ **Join the MMF's Chimney Swift Monitoring Program, and monitor chimneys in your area!**



# CHIMNEY SWIFT RANGE



## SWALLOW (LEFT) VS. SWIFT (RIGHT)



# ALL ABOUT CHIMNEYS



Since the 1960s, home heating methods have changed, resulting in chimneys to be demolished, sealed off and not in use. Modern chimneys are often installed with a metal lining, making it too slippery of a surface for chimney swifts to nest.

This has had a devastating impact on chimney swift populations, however, not all chimneys are made the same. Please see requirements below that make for good “swift habitat”:

## CHIMNEY REQUIREMENTS:

- ∞ Chimney is only used during the winter
- ∞ Must be composed of a rough material like stucco, brick, concrete or stone, with no metal lining
- ∞ No cap or cover on the top of the chimney
- ∞ Must be at least 2.5 bricks x 2.5 bricks wide, to give enough room to fit the full wingspan of the swift

Other characteristics that may increase the suitability of your chimney include:

- ∞ Close proximity to a body of water and open areas for water and food sources
- ∞ Close proximity to other buildings that have chimneys

## HOW TO KNOW IF A CHIMNEY IS BEING USED BY A SWIFT?

- ∞ Inspect it between the months of September and April with a flashlight
- ∞ You should notice a nest created from small twigs glued together with saliva
- ∞ Some characteristics to look for:
  - No grass or mud should be present in the nest (just twigs)
  - Dark grey feathers
  - Small eggshell pieces
  - Fallen twigs

## YOU HAVE CHIMNEY SWIFTS IN YOUR CHIMNEY. NOW WHAT?

- ∞ Watch for them arriving in mid-May
- ∞ Have your chimney cleaned in the fall to ensure that nests are able to attach to the chimney wall
- ∞ Do not have your chimney cleaned or roof renovated between mid-May and mid-August (breeding season!)
- ∞ Do not cover your chimney opening in any way, such as grills or chimney caps
- ∞ You can close the indoor opening of your chimney to avoid the birds entering your home
- ∞ Even if your chimney is no longer being used, do not demolish it! You are providing critical habitat for chimney swifts, even if they may not be present now!
- ∞ Let the MMF know! Contact the Métis Climate Monitoring Coordinator at [phoenix.combe@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:phoenix.combe@mmf.mb.ca), or the Species at Risk Specialist, at [amy.klassen@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:amy.klassen@mmf.mb.ca) and tell us about your chimney swift habitat!



# HOW TO MONITOR

Interested in becoming a Red River Métis Citizen Scientist and monitoring chimneys for the presence of swifts? Here is all you need to know:

## EQUIPMENT LIST:

- ∞ MMF Chimney Swift survey sheet with a pen/pencil
- ∞ Water, sunglasses, sunscreen, and a hat
- ∞ Lawn chair (you can also choose to sit in your car, as long as you have a clear view of the chimney being surveyed)
- ∞ Timer/clock

## WHEN:

Monitoring chimneys occurs one hour before sunset until 30 minutes after sunset. Chimney swifts typically will enter chimneys between 30 minutes before and 30 minutes after sunset.

- ∞ Note: Monitoring is best conducted with 2 people, so one person may continue to observe the chimney of interest, while the other person is responsible for recording information.

## HOW:

Arrive at least one hour before sunset to begin monitoring for chimney swifts. Give yourself a few minutes to get set up.

- ∞ Keep your eyes on the chimney of interest for 60-90 minutes, using your timing device
- ∞ If a chimney swift entry or exit is observed throughout the monitoring period, record the time.
- ∞ Ideally, RRM Citizen Scientist will conduct 4-6 evening observations at their designated site.

## WHERE:

MMF staff will work with our Red River Métis Citizens to find nearby chimneys with confirmed chimney swift sightings. This could include your own chimney if a nesting/roosting pair has been observed!

Submit all completed surveys to MMF's Métis Climate Monitoring Coordinator, Phoenix Combe, at [phoenix.combe@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:phoenix.combe@mmf.mb.ca) and Species-at-Risk Specialist, Amy Klassen, at [amy.klassen@mmf.mb.ca](mailto:amy.klassen@mmf.mb.ca).

## TAANSHII!





